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ABSTRACT

The 1986 Merit Principles Survey asked federal employees to share their opinions and experiences on a variety of issues. The survey queried a group of 16,651 employees that was representative of the full-time permanent work force in 22 of the largest federal agencies. Results showed that many federal employees held positive views of their jobs and that this viewpoint was increasing. Supervision accounted for at least some of these positive perceptions. A greater percentage of employees covered under specific pay-for-performance systems (Performance Management and Recognition System and Senior Executive Service) saw a link between performance and pay compared to those not covered. An overwhelming majority of supervisors reported that they take action to deal with problem employees. Over three-fourths of supervisors who took formal actions against employees that resulted in appeals to the Merit Systems Protection Board believed that the advantages of taking such actions outweighed the disadvantages. The incidence of prohibited personnel practices based on political affiliation was practically nonexistent. Employees expressed concern about such issues as perceived negative image of the federal employee; disparity of compensation; and lack of correlation between written job elements and performance standards. (YLB)

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A Special Study

ED307457

FEDERAL PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PRACTICES-- PERSPECTIVES FROM THE WORKPLACE



A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES BY
THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

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THE CHAIRMAN



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20419
December 16, 1987

Sirs:

In accordance with Section 202(a) of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. § 1205(a)(3)), it is my honor to submit this U. S. Merit Systems Protection Board report titled "*Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--Perspectives from the Workplace.*"

This report summarizes significant findings of the U. S. Merit Systems Protection Board's 1986 Merit Principles Survey. The survey was administered to a sample of 21,620 employees throughout the Government to elicit their opinions on a variety of issues.

I think you will find this report useful as you consider issues affecting civil service compensation and benefits. It may be particularly useful in calling attention to the need for: 1) continued emphasis on performance management programs to strengthen the link between employees' performance and job-related rewards and 2) further efforts to fashion an executive compensation system to attract and retain a highly competitive cadre of Government leaders.

Respectfully,

Daniel R. Levinson

The President of the United States
The President of the Senate
The Speaker of the House of Representatives

Washington, DC



The Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution 1787-1987

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OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the significant findings of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board's (MSPB) 1986 Merit Principles Survey. Administered to a sample of 21,620 employees throughout the Government, the survey asks employees to share their opinions and experiences on a variety of relevant issues. The survey results reveal that:

There are some areas in which employees' responses indicate encouraging trends, for example:

- Despite some speculation to the contrary, a substantial majority of Federal employees hold positive views of their jobs. Employees strongly agree that their skills and abilities are put to good use in their jobs and that the work they do is meaningful to them.
- A greater percentage of employees covered under specific pay-for-performance systems (Performance Management and Recognition System, and Senior Executive Service) see a link between performance and pay compared to those not covered under such systems.
- An overwhelming majority of supervisors report they take action to deal with problem employees.
- Over three-fourths of supervisors who took formal actions against employees which resulted in appeals to MSPB believe the advantages of taking such actions outweigh the disadvantages.
- Members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) think that, for the most part, their agencies have been more successful than not in meeting SES objectives.
- The incidence of prohibited personnel practices based on political affiliation is practically nonexistent.

There are other issues, however, about which employees express concern, including:

- Perceived negative public image of the Federal employee;
- Disparity of compensation--with the belief that many Federal jobs pay less than comparable ones outside the Government;
- Lack of correlation between written job elements and performance standards, and actual job performance expectations;
- Denial of job or job reward because of either discrimination or the operation of a "buddy system" without regard to merit;
- From the viewpoint of managers and supervisors, a general impression that, on balance, the quality of applicants for Federal jobs has declined slightly over the last 4 years; and
- Of all the objectives established for management of the SES, current SES members believe that the one relating to compensation has been met least successfully. Concern about undue politicization of Federal executives also persists.

In summary, there are numerous areas in the Federal civil service system still in need of attention. Results of the 1986 Merit Principles Survey also suggest, however, that there is reason for optimism in some of those areas.

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Federal Personnel Policies and Practices-- Perspectives from the Workplace

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is an overview of significant findings of the 1986 Merit Principles Survey, which asked Federal employees to share their opinions and experiences on a variety of relevant issues. Because the survey was a follow up to one the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) conducted in 1983, we repeated a number of items for comparative purposes.

There are three other MSPB reports which treat some of the survey areas in greater detail. These reports cover job satisfaction among Federal workers, performance management programs, and the Senior Executive Service.

2. METHODOLOGY

A sample of 21,620 employees throughout the Federal Government was surveyed (nearly three times as many people as in 1983), and 77 percent (16,651 employees) returned completed questionnaires. As designed, the survey queried a group that is representative of the full-time permanent work force in 22 of the largest Federal agencies. Responses were analyzed on the basis of such factors as: pay plan and grade level, years of Federal service, sex, age, and educational level of the respondents.

Where noteworthy results were identified, they have been reported in this or other related MSPB reports. In most cases in this overview, we have combined positive response categories such as "strongly agree" and "agree" into one category called "agree." Similarly, we have reported negative

response categories such as "strongly disagree" and "disagree" in one "disagree" category. Also, percentages may not total to 100 because of rounding and because we usually did not report the percentages for "don't know" or "can't judge" responses. A copy of the survey questionnaire is at Appendix A.

3. OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Because Federal managers and policymakers are greatly interested in the general morale of the Federal work force, we asked employees about satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs. Despite some speculation to the contrary, our results show that many Federal employees hold positive views of their jobs and that this viewpoint is increasing. Specifically, 68 percent of employees surveyed say they are satisfied with their jobs, and 71 percent say they "like working here." This reflects even greater satisfaction than was shown in the 1983 survey (where only 59 percent expressed satisfaction).

What exactly is contributing to this high level of satisfaction? Supervision is an area which may account for at least some of these positive perceptions. While not every aspect of supervision was rated equally high by the respondents, some important factors did elicit quite positive responses. For example, approximately 63 percent of employees responding report effective two-way communication between their supervisors and themselves. Similarly, 67 percent say they are treated fairly by their supervisors.

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Another area which appears to contribute to overall job satisfaction is the actual work performed. For example, 75 percent of those employees responding say that good use is made of their skills and abilities in their present jobs, and 81 percent report that the work they do on the job is meaningful. Fifty-three percent are satisfied with the chance they have to accomplish something worthwhile, and 67 percent believe that the work itself is more a reason to stay in Government than to leave.

4. EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION WITH SPECIFIC CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

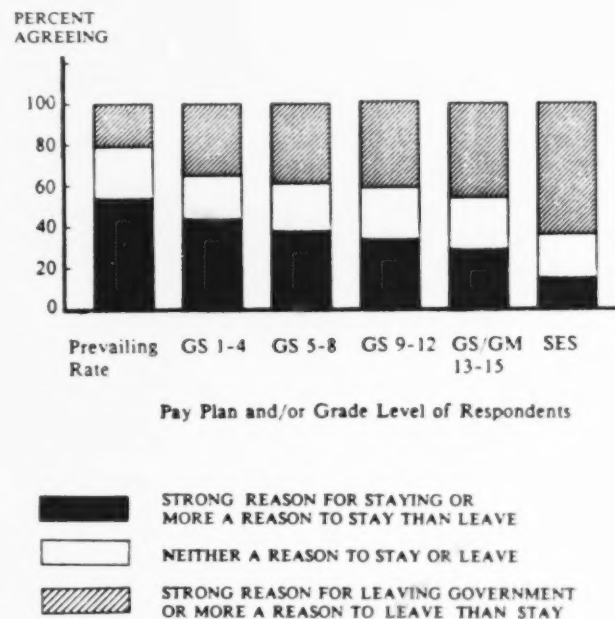
Although Federal workers appear to be generally satisfied with their jobs, they are not quite as positive about all aspects of their employment.

Sixty-six percent believe they are paid less than non-Federal employees doing similar jobs. This reflects even greater dissatisfaction than was shown in the 1983 survey, where only slightly over one-half (53 percent) thought they were paid less. (Only 7 percent of the 1986 respondents think they are paid more than employees outside the Government, compared with 13 percent who said that in 1983.) Even so, of those responding in 1986, 39 percent say their salary is a reason for staying with the Government, while 37 percent say it is a reason for leaving. As Figure 1 shows, responses differ by pay group: the higher the respondent's grade, the less likely the person is to view salary as a reason to stay with the Government. Generally, higher graded respondents say salary is a reason to

leave. Prevailing rate employees in general are more positive about salary as a reason to stay in the Government than those paid under other systems. An explanation for this difference may be that prevailing rate employees are paid similarly to employees in their local areas who perform comparable work. This could mean that their wages are more competitive in the local market and are therefore less likely to serve as a reason for workers to leave their Government jobs.

FIGURE 1. EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES ABOUT SALARY

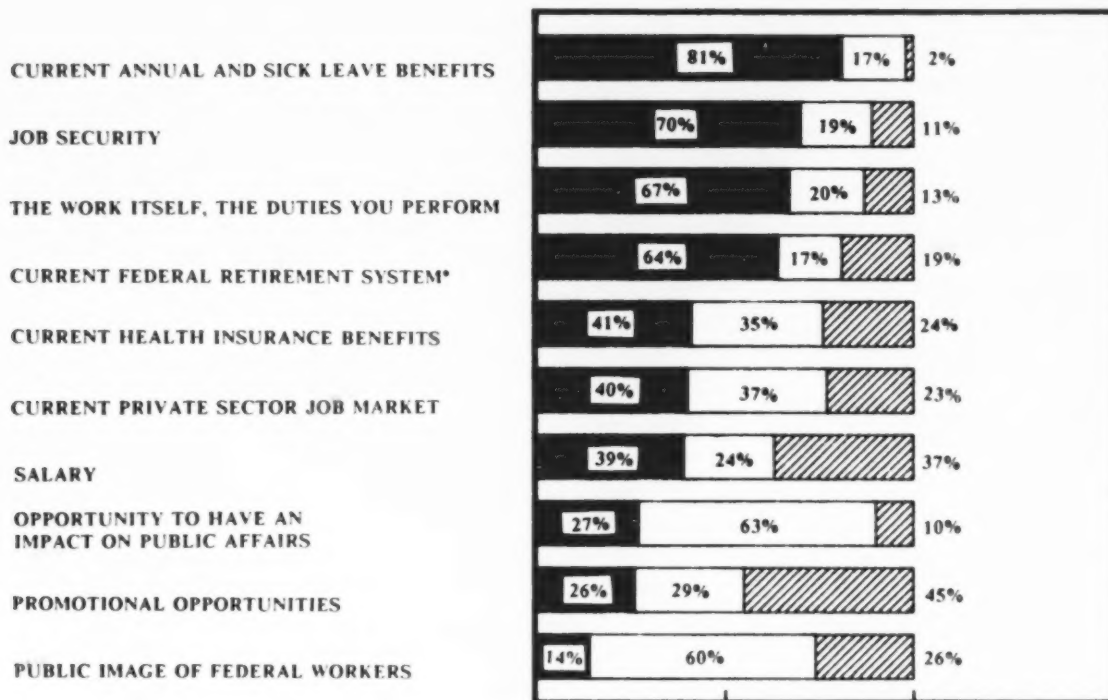
"TO WHAT EXTENT IS SALARY A REASON FOR YOU
TO STAY IN OR LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT?"



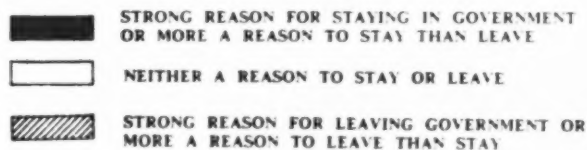
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FIGURE 2. JOB SATISFACTION WITH ASPECTS OF WORKLIFE

"TO WHAT EXTENT IS EACH OF THE FOLLOWING A REASON FOR YOU TO STAY IN OR LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT?"



PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING



*Most employees participating in this survey (approximately 95%) were covered under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) when they responded to this question. Therefore, these results primarily reflect attitudes toward CSRS, as opposed to the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS).

Figure 2 depicts employee satisfaction with various aspects of worklife in the Federal Government.

The public image of Federal workers is a concern among employees, with 70 percent believing the current image is negative. Only 16 percent say it is positive. When asked whether the public image would influence their decision to stay with the Government or leave, 14 percent report they view the image as a reason to stay, and 26 percent say it is a reason to leave.

Despite concerns with their salaries and the public's image of Federal workers, most employees say their retirement system, job security, and leave benefits provide incentive for staying in the Federal Government. In fact, when asked whether they plan to actively look for a new job, only 18 percent indicate they will look for a new job outside Government in the next year; 31 percent plan to look for a new Federal job.

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5. THE OPERATION OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

A major goal of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) is to strengthen the link between an employee's performance and the personnel actions taken regarding that employee, i.e., training, rewarding, re-assigning, promoting, reducing in grade, retaining, and removing. Key to these performance-based systems is the performance appraisal process. In the 1986 Merit Principles Survey, we asked employees to tell us about the performance appraisal process and how it is working.

The performance appraisal process centers around performance elements and standards. Performance elements are major duties and responsibilities which are important to success in a position, while performance standards measure the level of accomplishment of the elements. Elements must be position based; i.e., they must reflect actual work assigned to an employee. It is also important that the job description, which outlines the duties and responsibilities assigned to an employee, be accurate and up-to-date. Thus, we began our inquiry concerning the performance appraisal process by asking employees about the accuracy of their job descriptions and performance elements.

Fifty-nine percent of the employees say their job descriptions, at least to a considerable degree, accurately describe their jobs. (Thirteen percent, however, do not agree such accuracy exists.) About one-half of the respondents say their job elements are an accurate statement of the work they are expected to perform. A similar proportion, 53 percent, also say the standards used to evaluate their performance are fair. (Twenty-four percent disagree that their standards are fair.)

Of concern is the 46 percent who say their performance elements describe their work accurately only to "some," or "little or no" extent. Since the success of a performance-based personnel system depends on a high correlation between employees' performance elements and standards and the performance which is actually evaluated in the appraisal process, such a finding is of concern. For the system to realize its potential benefits, any discrepancy between performance elements and standards and what is actually appraised must be reconciled.

Employees' participation in the process of establishing their performance elements and standards is a positive step toward gaining their understanding and acceptance of what is expected of them. In fact, participation in this process is required for those employees covered by the Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) (supervisors and management officials who are in positions within grades GS 13-15 of the General Schedule), and is encouraged for all other employees. Overall, only 27 percent of all respondents say they develop their standards jointly with their supervisors. Even among the respondents who are PMRS employees, only 46 percent report participation in standards development. In interpreting the significance of this finding, caution should be applied. Coverage under a common set of standards prepared by a group of employees occupying similar positions fulfills the requirement for joint development (5 C.F.R. § 430.405 (c)(4)). Therefore, in a case such as this, a PMRS employee does not have to be personally involved in the development process. (Obviously, this does not diminish the need for clear communication of performance expectations between the supervisor and the employee.)

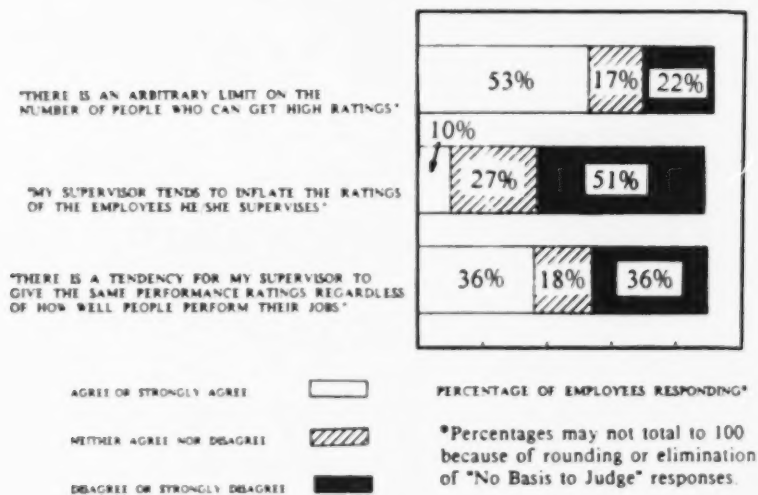
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Periodic appraisals of performance are a requirement under the CSRA, and nearly all employees (92 percent) indicate having received a performance appraisal within the last year. Moreover, many employees (63 percent) say their most recent rating accurately reflects their actual job performance. (Twenty-eight percent do not believe it accurately assesses performance.)

When asked about possible problems with the performance appraisal process, employees express mixed views, as shown in Figure 3.

What is the bottom line concerning employees' views of the operation of performance management programs? Things are not very positive. Employees appear skeptical about the relationship between performance and its consequences. As can be seen in Figure 4, most employees believe they will receive informal recognition (e.g., being told they do good work) for better performance. But other types of rewards are considered less likely. More importantly, there is clearly a perception among employees that better performers are not likely to be rewarded financially. In a related area, only one out of four employees feels that he or she has been fairly treated in regard to awards during the last 2 years.

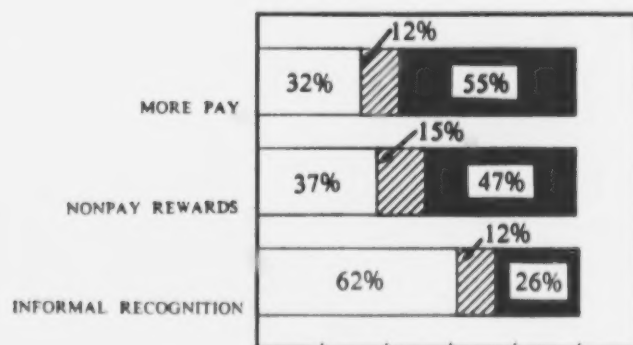
FIGURE 3. EMPLOYEE VIEWS ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS



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FIGURE 4. CONSEQUENCES OF IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

"IF YOU PERFORM BETTER IN YOUR PRESENT JOB,
HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WILL RECEIVE:"



PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYEES RESPONDING*

SOMEWHAT OR VERY LIKELY

NEITHER LIKELY NOR UNLIKELY

SOMEWHAT OR VERY UNLIKELY

*Percentages may not total to 100 because of rounding or elimination of "No Basis to Judge" responses.

Although the responses discussed in this section thus far do not express overwhelming confidence in a performance management system which is fair and objective and which links rewards to actual performance, a comparison with 1983 survey results provides a somewhat different, and perhaps more telling, perspective. Responses on every item in Figure 4 were more positive in 1986 than in 1983. A dramatic increase occurred in one item. In 1983, 17 percent felt they were likely to

receive more pay if they performed better, compared with 32 percent in 1986--an 88 percent increase in positive responses.

Another sizable increase occurred in the percentage of respondents who say they are likely to receive nonpay rewards (e.g., letters of commendation and honorary awards) for performance--37 percent in 1986, compared with only 23 percent in 1983. While the percentages are still low, they are moving in a positive direction.

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It is of particular interest whether those respondents covered by pay plans which purport to link pay to performance (i.e., GM and SES employees) agree that they can expect more pay for better performance. It is, after all, important that these employees feel positively about such a linkage so it will be an incentive for superior performance. While not unanimous, the responses of GM and SES employees surveyed in 1986 are indeed more positive than those of employees covered under other pay plans. For example, 45 percent of GM employees say they are likely to receive more pay if they perform better, compared to only 30

percent of GS employees who see a linkage between pay and performance. Responses of employees covered under different pay systems are shown in Table 1.

All in all, based on the 1986 survey responses, employees are more positive about the performance management process than they were a few years ago. Thus, we may be moving closer to achieving the performance-based personnel system envisioned under CSRA; however, we are clearly not yet there.

**TABLE 1. HOW EMPLOYEES VIEW THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN PAY AND PERFORMANCE**

"If you perform better in your present job, how likely is it that you will receive more pay?"

Pay Category of Respondent	Percent Responding Very Likely or Somewhat Likely
Prevailing Rate	33
General Schedule (GS)	30
Performance Management and Recognition System (GM)	45
Senior Executive Service	39

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6. MANAGING PEOPLE--DEALING WITH POOR PERFORMANCE AND MISCONDUCT

Just as the CSRA envisions a civil service where excellent performance is the basis for rewards and recognition, it also recognizes the other side of the coin: poor performance or misconduct should be the basis for corrective action or separation. One of CSRA's primary objectives is to give Federal managers the tools they need to deal with problem employees. In this section, we review how supervisors are executing their personnel management responsibilities, especially as they relate to dealing constructively with employee problems on the job.

How prevalent are situations involving employees with performance or conduct problems? Nearly two-thirds of Federal supervisors (64 percent) indicate that in the last 2 years they have had to deal with at least one problem employee. Supervisors who experienced these problems were asked to describe further the most recent occurrence. (Reported experiences are divided among cases involving 70 percent poor performance and 30 percent misconduct.) We asked them whether they took any actions to address the problem(s), and the results of those actions.

In situations involving poor performers, Table 2a indicates that the technique most commonly applied is counseling and working informally with the employee, which the supervisors generally regard as an effective measure. The next most frequently used actions are giving less than satisfactory performance ratings¹ and initiating formal action.² Other possible remedies are used with less frequency,

although not necessarily less effectively. Performance improvement plans, though seldom used are seen as relatively effective devices. Not taking any action is a course seldom selected, nor is it an effective alternative.

In situations involving employees with misconduct problems, supervisors take the actions indicated in Table 2b. Again, counseling and working informally with the employee is the approach used most. The next most frequently used technique is to initiate formal action against the employee, which supervisors say is an effective measure. While a performance improvement plan is a strategy we would not expect to find being used for misconduct problems, a small percentage do report using them with beneficial results. (This situation may be explained by the fact that, in conveying a written plan for improvement--even if it is for changed conduct instead of changed performance--supervisors enhance their communications with problem employees and clarify expectations, thus increasing the potential for some positive change to occur.)

¹ Performance appraisal systems which are established by each Federal agency are required to have five levels of summary performance ratings: two levels which are above the Fully Successful level, a Fully Successful level, and two levels which are below the Fully Successful level.

² The range of formal actions available to a supervisor include reassigning, reducing in grade, or removing an employee who, after an opportunity to demonstrate acceptable performance, continues to have unacceptable performance. Other alternatives including suspension, reduction in grade or pay, and removal are available in disciplinary cases, i.e., those involving misconduct.

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**TABLE 2a. WHAT SUPERVISORS SAY
THEY'RE DOING ABOUT POOR PERFORMERS**

ACTION TAKEN	EFFECT OF ACTION ¹ (PERCENT AGREEING)					
	PERCENT TAKING ACTION		MADE THINGS BETTER	MADE NO DIFFERENCE	MADE THINGS WORSE	NO BASIS TO JUDGE
Counseled and worked with employee informally	90		60	37	1	2
Referred employee to counseling service	14		32	55	7	6
Gave employee less than Satisfactory rating	28		33	48	15	4
Placed employee on a Performance Improvement Plan	18		56	34	5	5
Initiated formal action against the employee	22		51	36	9	4
Took no action	2		14	29	4	53
Have not yet decided	4					

¹ The effect of each action was evaluated only by those respondents who reported taking that specific action themselves.

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**TABLE 2b. WHAT SUPERVISORS SAY
THEY'RE DOING ABOUT MISCONDUCT PROBLEMS**

ACTION TAKEN	PERCENT TAKING ACTION	EFFECT OF ACTION ¹ (PERCENT AGREEING)				
		MADE THINGS BETTER	MADE NO DIFFERENCE	MADE THINGS WORSE	NO BASIS TO JUDGE	
Counseled and worked with employee informally	79		52	44	3	1
Referred employee to counseling service	29		34	58	2	6
Gave employee less than Satisfactory rating	12		36	54	8	2
Placed employee on a Performance Improvement Plan	7		52	23	25	0
Initiated formal action against the employee	44		61	20	6	13
Took no action	3		13	36	3	48
Have not yet decided	4					

¹ The effect of each action was evaluated only by those respondents who reported taking that specific action themselves.

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Supervisors' perceptions of the effect of an action in remedying employees' problems are likely to influence whether they use the same approach again. When we look at supervisors' responses more closely, we see some marked differences in how various categories of respondents view the efficacy of some of the more commonly taken courses of action. For example, while male and female supervisors report experiencing employee problems in similar proportions to the overall figures, i.e., 70 percent poor performance and 30 percent misconduct, the actions they take in 2 categories are notably different. In poor performance cases, 48 percent of male supervisors report initiating formal action; a greater proportion of

female supervisors, 71 percent, initiate formal actions against poor performers. (Fifty-six percent of the male supervisors say taking the formal action made things better; only 40 percent of female supervisors indicate similar improvement.) When dealing with misconduct, 52 percent of male supervisors take formal action compared with 29 percent of female supervisors. (In this case, the same proportion of male and female supervisors, 61 percent, assert that taking the action made things better.)

What obstacles do supervisors see to taking formal actions against employees when other measures fail? Tables 3a and 3b indicate

**TABLE 3a. OBSTACLES TO TAKING FORMAL ACTIONS AS SEEN BY
SUPERVISORS OF POOR PERFORMERS**

"To what extent, if any, are each of the following an obstacle in taking formal action against employees?"

FACTORS	GREAT OR CONSIDER- ABLE EXTENT	SOME EXTENT	LITTLE OR NO EXTENT
Lack of support from higher management	25%	25%	47%
Possibility of lowering office morale	7%	23%	67%
Results do not justify the effort	31%	24%	40%
Too many reviews/appeals	41%	19%	35%
Possibility of a labor relations complaint	22%	17%	56%
Possibility of a discrimination complaint	22%	16%	56%
Possibility of a whistle-blower complaint	6%	9%	78%
Lack of technical assistance	18%	21%	55%

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**TABLE 3b. OBSTACLES TO TAKING FORMAL ACTIONS AS SEEN BY
SUPERVISORS OF EMPLOYEES WITH MISCONDUCT PROBLEMS**

"To what extent, if any, are each of the following an obstacle in taking formal action against employees?"

FACTORS	GREAT OR CONSIDER- ABLE EXTENT	SOME EXTENT	LITTLE OR NO EXTENT
Lack of support from higher management	27%	21%	50%
Possibility of lowering office morale	7%	20%	71%
Results do not justify the effort	26%	24%	46%
Too many reviews/appeals	32%	24%	37%
Possibility of a labor relations complaint	19%	23%	55%
Possibility of a discrimination complaint	16%	16%	63%
Possibility of a whistle-blower complaint	6%	9%	73%
Lack of technical assistance	12%	15%	66%

that supervisors who experienced either poor performance or misconduct problems in their work groups do not believe any of the individual factors in the tables are major impediments. For both types of problems, however, the same three factors are identified by a sizable minority as obstacles: too many reviews/appeals, results not justified by the time and effort required

to take the action, and lack of support from higher management.

Overall, regardless of the type of problem they experienced, participating supervisors voice strong support for taking formal action when informal measures fail. Some 88 percent indicate they would take such action, with only 6 percent disagreeing.

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**7. SUPERVISORS' EXPERIENCES WITH
MSPB APPEALS**

Generally, most Federal employees are entitled to appeal certain personnel actions taken against them to the Merit Systems Protection Board. Eleven percent of the supervisors responding to our survey have had employees file appeals with MSPB in the last 3 years, and we asked them to reflect upon their most recent experience.

Who do supervisors ask when they need to

find out about the appeals process, especially if they have never had an employee who used the appeals channel? According to our respondents, locally available sources are consulted most frequently. As depicted in Table 4, agency personnel offices and labor relations offices are used by most supervisors to obtain the information they need. Those sources outside the agency, such as OPM and MSPB, are used by fewer supervisors. Private attorneys are used as information sources by fewer than one out of four supervisors.

**TABLE 4. SOURCES SUPERVISORS USE TO GET INFORMATION
ABOUT THE APPEALS PROCESS**

SOURCE	PERCENT OF SUPERVISORS USING THE SOURCE
Local agency personnel office	94%
Local agency labor relations office	89%
Supervisors or other employees	76%
Local agency legal office	70%
Local agency EEO office	65%
Office of Personnel Management	45%
MSPB	42%
Other	26%
Private Attorney	24%

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Sources which supervisors relied upon most heavily for information about the appeals process also were judged to provide information with high utility. As can be seen in Table 5, 79 percent of the supervisors using

information from their local agency personnel offices characterize it as "useful" or "very useful." Supervisors also regard the information provided by local labor relations offices as having high utility (80 percent).

**TABLE 5. USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION REGARDING
THE APPEALS PROCESS**

SOURCE ¹	UTILITY OF INFORMATION ²		
	Useful or very useful =====	Little or no use =====	Don't Know/ can't judge =====
Local agency personnel office	79%	21%	--
Local agency labor relations office	80%	18%	2%
Supervisors or other employees	52%	47%	1%
Local agency legal office	62%	33%	5%
Local agency EEO office	37%	55%	8%
OPM	43%	45%	12%
MSPB	24%	52%	24%
Other	31%	40%	30%
Private attorney	18%	68%	15%

¹ Sources are listed in descending order of usage, from most used to least used.

² Judgment of those supervisors who used the source about the quality of information they received.

**Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--
Perspectives from the Workplace**

Although there is some speculation that taking formal action against an employee can be an extremely trying experience for a supervisor, there are potential benefits that can result. One potential benefit is improved morale of the workgroup, since a problem employee can detract from the group's efficiency and effectiveness. We asked supervisors who took a formal action (which was appealed to MSPB) about the action's effect on their working relationships with people. As can be seen in Table 6, supervisors report that, for the most part, relationships do not deteriorate. Even the group showing the largest number of supervisors with worsened relationships (11

percent) had a sizable number of supervisors with improved relationships (37 percent). Thus, the most pronounced impact is at the working level, between the supervisor and the immediate workgroup.

Even though there are definite advantages and disadvantages resulting from taking actions which ultimately end up in appeal to MSPB, supervisors are very committed to taking the actions. Over three-fourths of the supervisors (77 percent) report that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages; 15 percent disagree with them, and 8 percent say they are not sure.

**TABLE 6. HOW SUPERVISORS SAY THEIR WORKING RELATIONSHIPS
ARE AFFECTED BY TAKING FORMAL ACTIONS**

RELATIONSHIPS WITH	IMPROVED	STAYED SAME	WORSENERD
Immediate supervisor	28%	71%	1%
Upper level management	23%	72%	5%
Other staff supervised	37%	52%	11%

**Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--
Perspectives from the Workplace**

**8. THE INCIDENCE OF PROHIBITED
PERSONNEL PRACTICES**

The Federal merit system strives for a work force in which employees are selected and advanced on the basis of competence rather than political or personal favoritism. Although protection of this merit principle had previously been accomplished through the enactment of numerous laws, rules, and regulations, the Civil Service Reform Act for the first time delineated merit system principles and defined prohibited personnel

practices. We asked respondents whether they had been subject to any prohibited personnel practices over the past 2 years. While responses do not indicate extensive merit system abuses, a sizable proportion of employees do believe they have been victimized by the "buddy system." Additionally, a somewhat smaller proportion also believe they have been denied a job or job reward because of discrimination (e.g., based on race, religion, sex, or handicapping condition). Table 7 depicts responses to specific questions about prohibited personnel practices.

**TABLE 7. EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES WITH PROHIBITED
PERSONNEL PRACTICES**

HAS THIS PRACTICE HAPPENED TO YOU?	YES	NO
Influenced to withdraw from competition for a job to increase another person's chances.	4%	96%
Denied a job or job reward as a result of another person's selection based on his/her family relationship.	6%	94%
Denied a job or job reward as a result of the "buddy system" without regard to merit.	28%	72%
Denied a job or job reward as a result of discrimination.	11%	89%
Pressured to resign or transfer because of political affiliation.	1%	99%
Denied a job or job reward as a result of political affiliation.	1%	99%

**Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--
Perspectives from the Workplace**

**9. THE QUALITY OF APPLICANTS FOR
FEDERAL JOBS**

There has been some concern expressed in recent years about the Federal Government's ability to attract high quality candidates for its work force. To examine this issue, we

asked supervisors about the quality of candidates for positions they have filled over the last 4 years. Table 8 depicts supervisors' general impression that on balance, the quality of applicants for Federal Government jobs has declined slightly over the past 4 years for all types of jobs, but most clearly for clerical jobs.

TABLE 8. THE QUALITY OF APPLICANTS FOR FEDERAL JOBS

"In the past 4 years, has the quality of applicants for vacancies in your work group improved or worsened?"

TYPE OF JOB	PERCENT AGREEING		
	QUALITY IMPROVED	REMAINED THE SAME	QUALITY WORSENERD
GS 5-7 entry-level professional or administrative	31%	33%	36%
GS 9-12 mid-level professional or administrative	28%	38%	35%
GS/GM 13-15 senior level	24%	40%	36%
Prevailing Rate	26%	41%	32%
GS 1-8 clerical	21%	37%	42%
GS 1-10 technical	25%	42%	33%
SES or GS 16-18	15%	54%	31%

A REPORT BY THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

Federal Personnel Policies and Practices-- Perspectives from the Workplace

10. THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

The Merit Systems Protection Board has looked frequently at the Senior Executive Service since its creation under the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. In this survey, we continue to evaluate a number of different aspects of the SES.

Established to ensure Federal executive management of the highest quality, the Senior Executive Service embraces a range of lofty objectives. How successfully are these objectives being met, in the opinion of current SES members? As Table 9 shows, SES members think that, more often than not, many of the objectives of the SES have been met to some extent. A compensation system designed to attract and retain highly competent senior executives is the single objective SES members are least likely to view as being successfully implemented.

These findings occur despite changes made to the SES compensation system since the 1983 MSPB Merit Principles Survey. Most notable were changes to the provisions of the Civil Service Reform Act concerning SES performance awards and bonuses. Initially, there existed a 50 percent limit on the number of career SES appointees who could receive awards and bonuses. Changes over the years have eliminated this statutory restriction. (There does remain a budgetary constraint, but this would allow up to 60 percent to receive awards and bonuses.)

To some extent SES members in 1986 are more positive concerning bonuses. In responding to the statement "There are enough bonuses so that if I perform well I have a good chance of receiving one," 10

percent of the Senior Executive Service members expressed agreement in 1983 and 19 percent agreed 3 years later. Although a modest gain, the increase follows a slight upward trend in positive responses which is characteristic of many of the survey items.

The issue of politicization concerns many Federal employees both inside and outside the SES. By law, the total number of noncareer (political) SES appointees is limited to 10 percent of the total number of SES positions in all agencies. Even with this limitation, concerns about undue politicization of Federal executives persist. Table 10 provides a picture of how executives at 22 of the largest Federal agencies feel about this issue.

It is especially interesting to compare responses of career executives and political executives within agencies. Executives were asked about the extent to which they believe career executives and political executives possess a number of attributes (e.g., they bring valuable experience to their jobs, have good leadership skills, or support and uphold merit principles). Political executives are more positive about their counterparts in the career service than career SES members are about their agency's political executives. For example, 86 percent of political executives agree that career executives bring valuable experience to the job. Only 28 percent of career executives, on the other hand, agree that noncareer executives bring valuable experience to the job. These differing views which each component holds of the other will be treated in greater detail and included in future MSPB studies on the Senior Executive Service.

**Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--
Perspectives from the Workplace**

**TABLE 9. HOW CURRENT SES MEMBERS EVALUATE EFFORTS
TO MEET SES OBJECTIVES¹**

"How successful is your agency in meeting these objectives?"

SES OBJECTIVES	COMPLETELY OR SOMEWHAT SUCCESSFUL	NEITHER	COMPLETELY OR SOMEWHAT UNSUCCESSFUL
Compensation, retention, and tenure are based on individual and organizational performance.	48%	17%	32%
Senior executives are responsible for the productivity of employees under them.	63%	17%	19%
Recognizing exceptional accomplishment.	55%	15%	29%
Providing for reassignment to meet agency needs.	39%	23%	27%
Providing assistance for SESers who are removed for nondisciplinary reasons.	13%	15%	12%
Protecting executives from capricious actions.	27%	18%	26%
Providing for program continuity.	53%	22%	16%
Ensuring accountability for honest, economical, and efficient Government.	55%	24%	15%
Providing for development of highly competent senior executives.	38%	24%	34%
Providing for a system free from improper political interference.	43%	21%	30%
Providing a compensation system designed to attract and retain highly competent senior executives.	13%	14%	71%

¹ Percentages may not total to 100 because of rounding or elimination of "Don't Know" or "Can't Judge" responses.

**Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--
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TABLE 10. A POLITICIZED SES?

Responses of current SES members to the question: How successful is your agency in providing for an executive system which is guided by the public interest and free from improper political interference?

AGENCY (*)	SUCCESSFUL ¹	NEITHER	UNSUCCESSFUL ²
Department of the Treasury (260)	62%	18%	16%
Department of the Army (187)	58%	14%	20%
Small Business Administration (14)	57%	7%	36%
National Aeronautics and (259)	54%	19%	17%
Space Administration			
Department of the Air Force (128)	51%	16%	20%
Environmental Protection (186)	48%	25%	24%
Agency			
Department of Agriculture (195)	44%	25%	28%
Department of the Navy (241)	44%	21%	27%
Other Department of (204)	44%	26%	24%
Defense Agencies			
Department of Justice (132)	42%	14%	38%
Department of Labor (92)	41%	25%	31%
Veterans Administration (84)	39%	29%	25%
Department of Transportation (205)	38%	18%	39%
Department of Commerce (260)	37%	26%	33%
Department of Energy (261)	35%	20%	39%
Department of Health and (301)	35%	22%	32%
Human Services			
General Services (54)	30%	26%	35%
Administration			
Office of Personnel (23)	30%	13%	57%
Management			
Department of Interior (135)	28%	22%	46%
Department of State ³ (250)	28%	24%	44%
Department of Education (29)	14%	21%	62%
Department of Housing and (61)	13%	23%	59%
Urban Development			

(*) Number in parenthesis indicates total number of actual respondents for each agency.

¹ Includes responses indicating "completely successful" and "somewhat successful."

² Includes responses indicating "somewhat unsuccessful" and "completely unsuccessful."

³ Includes respondents from other foreign affairs-related agencies, e.g., Agency for International Development and the United States Information Agency.

Federal Personnel Policies and Practices-- Perspectives from the Workplace

To what extent can we expect to successfully recruit new talent into the Senior Executive Service and retain those already in it? Slightly over one-half (52 percent) of the male respondents at the GS 12-15 and GM 13-15 grade levels and 44 percent of the female respondents at these grades say they would accept an SES position if offered one. When current SES members were asked if they would leave the SES if offered an equivalent GS 16-18 position, 26 percent said they would seriously consider it; a greater number, 44 percent, say they would not exercise such an option. These responses are more positive than those found in the 1983 survey, in which 35 percent said they would personally consider

a move to a GS 16-18 position and 37 percent indicated they would not.

We asked GS 12-15 and GM 13-15 participants to evaluate possible reasons for joining the Senior Executive Service. Their responses are depicted in Table 11.

As Table 11 shows, many GS/GM employees find aspects of the Senior Executive Service appealing. Salary, managerial responsibilities, and the increased chance to have an impact on public policy are the primary attractions for these employees. The chief deterrent is the perceived possibility of a geographic transfer.

TABLE 11. GS/GM ATTITUDES ABOUT THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

"To what extent is each of the following a reason for you to join or not join the SES?"

ASPECTS CONSIDERED	REASON TO JOIN ¹	NEITHER ²	REASON NOT TO JOIN ³
Salary	67%	17%	7%
Managerial Responsibilities	65%	16%	11%
Job Security	17%	46%	24%
Employee Protection	13%	50%	21%
Unlimited accrual of annual leave	38%	48%	2%
Chance for geographic transfer	14%	34%	42%
Chance to impact public policy	54%	32%	3%

¹ Includes employees responding "strong reason to join" or "more a reason to join than not join."

² Includes employees responding "no significance one way or another."

³ Includes employees responding "strong reason not to join" or "more a reason not to join than to join."

Federal Personnel Policies and Practices-- Perspectives from the Workplace

11. CONCLUSION

When we listen to what Federal employees have to say about their work, we are presented with the broad range of opinion one would reasonably expect in an organization which employs over 2 million civilians. Some trends are apparent, however, and these warrant recognition by leaders and policymakers who are involved in the ongoing deliberation and design of programs aimed at improving management of the Federal Government. Clearly, the perspective of the current Federal work force is both a valuable and valid indicator which one must consider in assessing whether the promises of the Civil Service Reform Act are being fulfilled.

The hopeful note is that Federal employees generally feel good about the work they do. They are less positive about some other aspects of their worklife, including pay and the negative public image of Federal workers. Regarding the issue of pay, as this report goes to publication there is proposed legislation³ that would provide for testing alternative systems of compensation for Federal employees. Additionally, the Administration has proposed a bill⁴ which would introduce flexibilities in determining pay based upon personnel management demonstration projects at two Navy laboratories. The fact that over one-half of Federal employees do not see a link between performance and pay should be a primary concern to those who are considering changes in Federal compensation systems.

³ H.R. 3132, 100th Congress, 1st Session - Federal Pay Reform Act of 1987.

⁴ H.R. 2700, 100th Congress, 1st Session - Civil Service Simplification Act of 1986.

The strong support supervisors voice for taking formal actions against problem employees when informal measures fail is a validation of an underlying premise of the Civil Service Reform Act. We regard this as a positive sign. The morale and productivity of the Federal work force are significantly undermined if managers do not deal appropriately with problem employees.

Executives are becoming more positive about the success with which the objectives of the Senior Executive Service are being implemented. Even so, significant pressures exist in designing and implementing a compensation system which attracts and retains highly competent members, and which recognizes exceptional accomplishment.

Further study is indicated to identify more precisely the basis of supervisors' perceptions that the quality of candidates for Federal jobs is declining. The challenge to attract and retain the best and the brightest to public service careers is a serious one and deserves attention. Are some of the factors causing dissatisfaction among the current Federal work force (e.g., negative public image of Federal workers) also important reasons for high quality individuals to stay away from Government service? We cannot make definitive judgments from the survey data, but clearly the more we learn about the factors which attract and help to retain Federal employees, the better prepared we will be to meet the challenge.



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
Washington, D.C. 20419

Dear Federal Co-worker:

We need your help with this survey of Federal pay and working conditions.

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), an independent Federal agency created by Congress in 1978, is continuing its study of the Federal personnel system. The results of this study will be reported to Congress and the President and made available to the public. You can make a difference.

The enclosed questions give you the opportunity to share your opinions and experiences relative to your job, your supervisor, the people with whom you work, performance appraisals, and so on. In developing these questions, we sought the assistance of national Federal employee unions, professional associations, and other interested groups. We will keep your answers confidential. Please do not put your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

Your name was selected as part of a random sample of Federal employees. Since this sample represents only a small portion of the total Federal work force, it is extremely important that you return the enclosed questionnaire. You may answer these questions at your worksite or within the privacy of your home. On the average, it will take approximately 20 minutes to answer the questions that apply to you.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage paid envelope within 5 days after you receive it. If you would like a copy of the report(s) published as a result of this survey, you may write to us at the address given on the second page of this questionnaire.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Dennis L. Little

Dennis L. Little
Director, Office of Merit Systems
Review and Studies



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
Washington, D.C. 20419

1986 MERIT PRINCIPLES SURVEY

This survey asks Federal employees to share their opinions and experiences on a variety of personnel issues. This questionnaire is divided into six topic areas:

- Your job and the personnel practices in your work group
- Individual and organizational performance
- Pay for performance
- Managing people
- Senior Executive Service
- Personal and job information

You may not have to answer every question in this survey. Instructions in each section will tell you which questions to skip. Also, please use the last page of this questionnaire to write in any additional responses or comments you may wish to make.

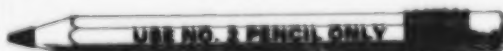
MARKING INSTRUCTIONS



- Do NOT use ink or ball point pens.
- Erase completely and cleanly any answer you wish to change.
- Do not make any stray marks in this booklet.

• CORRECT MARK: ○ ● ○ ○

• INCORRECT MARKS: ⊗ ⊙ ⊖ ⊕



REPORT REQUEST ADDRESS

If you would like a copy of the reports published as a result of this survey, address your request to:

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies
Room 852
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20419

PRIVACY ACT NOTICE

Collection of the requested information is authorized by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-454). Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and none of the information you choose to supply will be associated with you individually.

SECTION I

JOB SATISFACTION

This section asks about personnel practices and your job satisfaction. Please mark ONE response for each question, unless otherwise directed.

1. How often is good use made of your skills and abilities in your present job?

- ☐ Almost always
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Seldom
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

2. How does your pay compare to that of employees outside the Government who are doing jobs similar to yours?

- ☐ I am paid much less.
- ☐ I am paid somewhat less.
- ☐ I am paid about the same.
- ☐ I am paid somewhat more.
- ☐ I am paid much more.
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

3. If you perform better in your present job, how likely is it that you will: (Mark ONE response for each action.)

ACTION

- a. Receive more pay (e.g., bonus, promotion, cash award)?
- b. Receive non-pay rewards (e.g., letter of commendation)?
- c. Receive informal recognition (e.g., being told you do good work)?

	Very likely	Probably likely	Probably unlikely	Very unlikely	Don't know/can't judge
a.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. What do you believe is the current image of Federal employees?

- ☐ Very positive
- ☐ Somewhat positive
- ☐ Neither positive nor negative
- ☐ Somewhat negative
- ☐ Very negative
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

5. To what extent is each of the following a reason for you to stay in or to leave the Government? (Mark ONE response for each reason.)

REASON

- a. Public image of Federal workers
- b. Opportunity to have an impact on public affairs
- c. The work itself, the duties you perform
- d. Current Federal retirement system
- e. Current health insurance benefits
- f. Current annual and sick leave benefits
- g. Salary
- h. Promotional opportunities
- i. Job security
- j. Current private sector job market

	Strong reason for staying in Government	Reason for staying in or leaving Government	Neither a reason to stay nor leave	Reason for leaving Government	Strong reason for leaving Government	No reason to judge
a.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Mark ONE response for each statement.)

STATEMENT

- a. The work I do on my job is meaningful to me.
- b. During the next year, I will actively look for a new Government job outside this work group.
- c. During the next year, I will actively look for a new job outside Government.
- d. I am satisfied with the chances I have to accomplish something worthwhile.
- e. In general, I like working here.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/can't judge
a.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Do you support the concept of having your pay based upon how well you perform?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Neither yes nor no
- ☐ Probably no
- ☐ Definitely no
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

8. In the past 2 years, to what extent do you believe you have been treated fairly in regard to the following? (Mark ONE response which best matches your opinion for each area.)

AREA

- a. Promotions
b. Awards
c. Training
d. Job assignments

To a very great extent	To a considerable extent	To some extent	To a little extent	To no extent	Don't know/can't judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. In which one of the following subject areas do you feel you need the most training to do your job better? (Mark only ONE.)

- ☐ General supervisory or management skills
☐ Technical skills (e.g., skills related to performing some aspect of your job better)
☐ Computer literacy
☐ Personal development techniques (effective writing, stress management, time management, leadership styles, professional ethics, etc.)
☐ Orientation/education programs to understand the administration's policies and programs
☐ Government operations
☐ Do not need training → Skip to Question 12, below.
☐ Other

10. Have you formally requested training in the subject area you marked in Question 9?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. Do you anticipate receiving training in the next 12 months in the subject area you marked in Question 9?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (If no, please explain the reasons you do not anticipate receiving this training in the space provided on the last page of the questionnaire.)
☐ Not sure

12. In the past 2 years, have any of the following practices happened to you? (Mark ONE response for each practice.) Were you . . .

PRACTICE

- a. Influenced to withdraw from competition for a Federal job in order to help another person's chances for getting the job . . .
b. Denied a job or job reward as a result of another person's selection based on his/her family relationship
c. Denied a job or job reward as a result of another person's selection based on the "buddy system" without regard to merit . . .
d. Denied a job or job reward based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicapping condition, or marital status
e. Pressured to resign or transfer on account of political affiliation
f. Denied a job or job reward as a result of political affiliation

Yes, it happened to me.	No, it did not happen to me.
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐
☐	☐

13. In general, I am satisfied with my job.

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Undecided
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

SECTION II

PERFORMANCE

This section asks your opinions about your performance and the performance of your work group, including your supervisor. Please mark ONE response for each question, unless otherwise directed.

"YOUR WORK GROUP" REFERS TO THE CO-WORKERS WITH WHOM YOU COME IN CONTACT ON A MORE-OR-LESS DAILY BASIS. IF YOU ARE A SUPERVISOR, "YOUR WORK GROUP" REFERS TO THE PEOPLE YOU SUPERVISE.

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your supervisor? (Mark ONE response for each statement.)

STATEMENT

- a. There is effective two-way communication between my supervisor and me.
b. I have trust and confidence in my supervisor.
c. My supervisor treats me fairly.
d. My supervisor has good technical skills.
e. My supervisor has good leadership qualities.
f. My supervisor encourages me to offer ideas and suggestions to improve productivity and/or quality of work.
g. My supervisor has organized our work group effectively to get the work done.

To a very great extent	To a considerable extent	To some extent	To a little extent	To no extent	Don't know/can't judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. If the number of people in your work group stayed the same, to what extent do you think the amount of work done in your area could be increased?

- ☐ To a very great extent
☐ To a considerable extent
☐ To some extent
☐ To a little extent
☐ To no extent
☐ Don't know/can't judge

16. If the people in your work group stayed the same, to what extent do you think the quality of work done in your area could be improved?

- ☐ To a very great extent
- ☐ To a considerable extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To a little extent
- ☐ To no extent
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

17. To what extent does your job description accurately describe the work you perform?

- ☐ To a very great extent
- ☐ To a considerable extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To a little extent
- ☐ To no extent
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

18. To what extent are the job elements in your performance standards an accurate statement of the work you are expected to perform in your job?

- ☐ To a very great extent
- ☐ To a considerable extent
- ☐ To some extent
- ☐ To a little extent
- ☐ To no extent
- ☐ Do not have performance standards
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the performance appraisal process in your work group? (Mark ONE response for each statement.)

STATEMENT

- a. There is an arbitrary limit on the number of people who can get high ratings.
- b. The standards used to evaluate my performance are fair.
- c. My supervisor keeps me informed on how well I am performing.
- d. There is a tendency for my supervisor to give the same performance ratings regardless of how well people perform their jobs.
- e. My supervisor tends to inflate the ratings of the employees he/she supervises.
- f. My supervisor and I jointly developed my performance standards.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20. Did your most recent performance rating present an accurate picture of your actual job performance?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

21. Have you received a performance appraisal in the past 12 months?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

22. Are you at either the GS 12 through GS 15 or the GM 13 through GM 15 grade level?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No → Skip to Question 29, page 6.

SECTION III

PAY FOR PERFORMANCE

This section asks questions about the current pay for performance system and membership in the SES. (Mark ONE response for each question, unless otherwise directed.)

23. If you were offered a position in the Senior Executive Service (SES), would you accept it?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

24. To what extent is each of the following a reason for you to join or not to join the SES? (Mark ONE response for each reason.)

REASON

- a. Salary
- b. Managerial or executive responsibilities
- c. Job security
- d. Employee protections.
- e. Unlimited accrual of annual leave
- f. Chance of geographic transfer.
- g. Increased chance to have an impact on public policy.

Strongly agree to join	Agree to join	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree to join	Strongly disagree to join	No basis to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. How much do you know about the changes made to the merit pay system when it became the current Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) for supervisors and management officials at grades 13 through 15 in your agency?

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Little or nothing

26. If you had the choice, would you choose to be covered by your agency's Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) (Answer even if you are currently covered by PMRS.)

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

27. Are you presently covered by PMRS, formerly the merit pay system?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No → Skip to Question 29, below.
- ☐ Not sure

28. How long have you been covered by a pay for performance (PMRS or merit pay) system?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ 6 months to less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ More than 2 years
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

29. Are you a supervisor (i.e., do you sign performance appraisals for other employees)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No → Skip to Question 42, page 8.
- ☐ Not sure

SECTION IV

MANAGING PEOPLE

This section asks about how supervisors are dealing with various aspects of being a supervisor, including dealing constructively with employees with problems on the job. (Mark ONE response for each question, unless otherwise directed.)

30. During the past 2 years, have you supervised employees with poor performance or misconduct problems?

- ☐ Yes, poor performance
- ☐ Yes, misconduct
- ☐ Yes, poor performance and misconduct
- ☐ No → Skip to Question 41, page 8.
- ☐ Not sure

31. Which of these problems did you have to deal with most recently?

- ☐ Poor performance
- ☐ Misconduct

Questions 32 to 34 refer to the most recent experience that you indicated in question 31 above. Please base your answers solely on that most recent experience.

32A. What did you do about the employee's behavior?

(Place a mark in this column after each action you took)

ACTION TAKEN

- a. I counseled the employee and worked with him/her informally.
- b. I referred the employee to a counseling service provided by my agency.
- c. I gave the employee a less than satisfactory performance rating.
- d. I placed the employee on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
- e. I initiated formal action against him/her.
- f. I took no action.
- g. I have not yet decided what to do.

I Took this Action

EFFECTS OF ACTION ON EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE

Made Things Worse		Made Things Better	
☐	→	☐	→
☐	→	☐	→
☐	→	☐	→
☐	→	☐	→
☐	→	☐	→
☐	→	☐	→
☐	→	☐	→

33. If in the future you supervise an employee with the same problem, will you recommend formal action if informal measures fail?

- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ More likely than unlikely
- ☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ☐ More unlikely than likely
- ☐ Very unlikely
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

34. To what extent, if any, are each of the following an obstacle to taking formal action against employees with the same problem who do not change their behavior? (Mark ONE response for each potential obstacle.)

POTENTIAL OBSTACLE

- a. Lack of support from higher management.
- b. Possibility of lowering morale of other workers
- c. Results do not justify the time and effort required of me.
- d. Too many reviews/appeals of decision to discipline
- e. Possibility of labor relations complaint
- f. Possibility of discrimination complaint
- g. Possibility of "whistle-blower" complaint.
- h. Lack of technical/legal assistance while carrying out the action

	To a very great extent	To some extent	To no extent
a.	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐
c.	☐	☐	☐
d.	☐	☐	☐
e.	☐	☐	☐
f.	☐	☐	☐
g.	☐	☐	☐
h.	☐	☐	☐

35. During the past 3 years, have any employees supervised by you, or by a subordinate supervisor, filed an appeal to the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

→ Skip to Question 41, page 8.

Questions 36-39 refer to your most recent experience during the past 3 years as a supervisor involved in the MSPB appeals process. Mark the ONE response which reflects your most recent experience.

36. What action did the agency take against the employee?

- ☐ Removal (Other than RIF)
- ☐ Suspension for more than 14 days
- ☐ Reduction in grade or pay
- ☐ Denial of within-grade pay increase
- ☐ RIF (Reduction in force)
- ☐ Other

37. In general, what was the final outcome of the most recent appeal with which you were involved?

- ☐ MSPB reduced or modified the agency action
- ☐ Agency won
- ☐ Employee won
- ☐ Agency and employee settled the appeal before receiving any MSPB decisions
- ☐ Employee voluntarily resigned, retired or transferred before a final decision was reached
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

38. The following are sources from which you may have received information about the appeals process. How useful was the information you received from each source? (Mark ONE response for each source.)

SOURCE

- a. My local agency labor relations office
- b. My local agency personnel office
- c. My local agency EEO office.
- d. My local agency legal office.
- e. Supervisors or other employees.
- f. A private attorney.
- g. MSPB
- h. OPM
- i. Other.

	Very useful	Little or no use	Don't know/Can't judge
a.	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐
c.	☐	☐	☐
d.	☐	☐	☐
e.	☐	☐	☐
f.	☐	☐	☐
g.	☐	☐	☐
h.	☐	☐	☐
i.	☐	☐	☐

39. How did taking this formal action affect your working relationships with the following employees?

- a. Your immediate supervisor.
- b. Upper level management.
- c. Other staff that you supervise

	Greatly improved	Remained the same	Greatly worsened
a.	☐	☐	☐
b.	☐	☐	☐
c.	☐	☐	☐

40. Overall, do the advantages of taking formal action against an employee which could result in an appeal before MSPB outweigh the disadvantages? (Mark ONE response.)

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

(Please explain the reasons for your response to this question in the space provided on the last page of the questionnaire.)

41. In the past 4 years, has the quality of applicants for vacancies in your work group improved or worsened? (Mark ONE response for each type of position vacancy.)

POSITION VACANCIES

- a. GS 5 to 7 entry level professional or administrative
- b. GS 9 to 12 midlevel professional or administrative
- c. GS or GM 13 to 15 senior level professional or administrative
- d. Wage grade (trades and crafts)
- e. GS 1 to 8 clerical or secretarial
- f. GS 1 to 10 technical (e.g., engineering or medical technician)
- g. SES or GS 16 to 18
- h. Other

QUALITY OF APPLICANTS					
Greatly improved	Somewhat improved	Remained the same	Somewhat worsened	Greatly worsened	No basis to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

42. Are you a member of the Senior Executive Service?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No —————> Skip to Section VI, page 11.

SECTION V

SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

This section asks about your experiences as a member of the Senior Executive Service (SES). Please mark ONE response for each question, unless otherwise directed.

43. How long have you been in the SES?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to less than 2 years
- ☐ 2 to less than 5 years
- ☐ 5 years or more

44. Which type of SES appointment do you have?

- ☐ Career
- ☐ Non-career
- ☐ Limited

45. Are you?

- ☐ A manager/supervisor
- ☐ A scientist or technical expert serving in a nonmanagerial capacity
- ☐ Other

46. Do you supervise SES employees?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

47. If you were offered a GS 16-18 vacancy in your agency involving approximately the same kind of work, would you seriously consider leaving the SES and moving to the GS 16-18 level?

- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

48. When will you be eligible to retire voluntarily (age 55 and 30 years of service, age 60 and 20 years of service, or age 62 and 5 years of service)?

- ☐ I am eligible now
- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 2 to less than 5 years
- ☐ 5 to less than 8 years
- ☐ 8 years or more

48A. In the past 2 years which of the following sources provided training to you?

48B. Did that training help you to do your job better? (Mark ONE response for each training source you marked.)

If you have received no training in the past 2 years, please mark here ☐ and go to question 50.

(Place a mark in this column if you received training from this source.)

TRAINING SOURCE

I received training from

- a. Federal Executive Institute (FEI) ☐
- b. OPM training other than FEI ☐
- c. Graduate-level, university-sponsored training ☐
- d. In-house agency training ☐
- e. Training performed by other agencies ☐
- f. Non-government training (public interest groups, private sector organizations, professional organizations) ☐
- g. Other ☐

Definitely yes	Probably yes	Not sure	Probably not	Definitely not	No basis to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

50. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the SES? (Mark ONE response for each statement.)

STATEMENT

- a. Performance is the sole criterion in my agency for awarding SES bonuses or rank awards.
- b. The bonus/rank award system is a strong incentive for me to do my best.
- c. There are enough bonuses so that if I perform well I have a good chance of receiving one.
- d. Scientists and technical experts should not be part of the current SES system, but rather should have their own comparable system.
- e. The SES performance appraisal process has improved organizational effectiveness.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

51. How do you feel about the number of SES members in your agency to get the job done? (Mark ONE response for A., career executives, and ONE response for B., political executives.)

A. CAREER EXECUTIVES

- ☐ More executives than necessary
- ☐ About the right number
- ☐ Not enough executives
- ☐ No basis to judge

B. POLITICAL EXECUTIVES

- ☐ More executives than necessary
- ☐ About the right number
- ☐ Not enough executives
- ☐ No basis to judge

52. To what extent do the following statements reflect your opinions of senior executives in your agency? (Please mark ONE response for each statement about A., career executives, and ONE response for each statement about B., political executives.)

STATEMENT

A. Career Executives

B. Political Executives

- a. Bring valuable experience to their jobs
- b. Have good leadership qualities
- c. Have good management skills
- d. View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service
- e. Support and uphold merit principles
- f. Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities
- g. Play an important role in the policymaking of their agencies
- h. Receive adequate training in understanding the administration's policies and programs

A. Career Executives						B. Political Executives					
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not wish to judge	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not wish to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

53. The objectives for the Senior Executive Service listed below are taken directly from the law. How successful is your agency in meeting these objectives?

SES OBJECTIVES

- a. Basing compensation, retention, and tenure on executive success measured in terms of individual and organizational performance
- b. Assuring that senior executives are accountable and responsible for the effectiveness and productivity of employees under them
- c. Recognizing exceptional accomplishment
- d. Enabling the head of an agency to reassign senior executives to best accomplish the agency's mission
- e. Providing severance pay, early retirement, and placement assistance for senior executives who are removed from the SES for non-disciplinary reasons
- f. Protecting senior executives from arbitrary or capricious actions
- g. Providing for program continuity and policy advocacy in the management of public programs
- h. Ensuring accountability for honest, economical, and efficient Government
- i. Providing for the initial and continuing systematic development of highly competent senior executives
- j. Providing for an executive system which is guided by the public interest and free from improper political interference
- k. Providing a compensation system designed to attract and retain highly competent senior executives

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Do not wish to judge
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

54. If only 2 changes could be made in the SES, what changes would you recommend and why? Please use the space provided on the last page of the questionnaire.

SECTION VI**PERSONAL AND JOB INFORMATION**

This section asks for information about your job history and some general questions about you. Please mark **ONE** response for each question, unless otherwise directed.

55. How many years have you been a Federal Government employee (excluding military service)?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-25 years
- ☐ 26-30 years
- ☐ 31 years or more

56. Where do you work?

- ☐ Headquarters within Washington, D.C. metropolitan area
- ☐ Headquarters outside Washington, D.C. metropolitan area
- ☐ Field location (e.g., regional office, field office) within Washington, D.C. metropolitan area
- ☐ Field location (e.g., regional office, field office) outside Washington, D.C. metropolitan area

57. How many years of full-time employment have you had outside the Federal Government within the past five years?

- ☐ None
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-5 years

58. Are you?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

59. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 20
- ☐ 20-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-54
- ☐ 55-59
- ☐ 60-64
- ☐ 65 or older

60. What is your highest education level (Mark only ONE.)

- ☐ Less than high school diploma
- ☐ High school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED)
- ☐ High school diploma or G.E.D. plus some college or technical training
- ☐ College degree (B.A., B.S., or other bachelor's degree)
- ☐ Some graduate school
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree

61. What is your pay category or classification?

- ☐ General Schedule or similar (GS, GG, and GW)
- ☐ Performance Management and Recognition System (GM)
- ☐ Wage system (WG, WS, WL, WD, and WN)
- ☐ Executive (ST, EX, and ES) or equivalent
- ☐ Other

62. What is your current pay grade?

- ☐ 1-4
- ☐ 5-8
- ☐ 9-12
- ☐ 13-14
- ☐ 15
- ☐ 16-18
- ☐ ES-1, ES-2, or ES-3
- ☐ ES-4, ES-5, or ES-6
- ☐ Other

63. Where do you work?

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Commerce
- ☐ Defense:
- ☐ Air Force
- ☐ Army
- ☐ Navy
- ☐ Other DOD
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Energy
- ☐ Environmental Protection Agency
- ☐ General Services Administration
- ☐ Health and Human Services
- ☐ Housing and Urban Development
- ☐ Interior
- ☐ Justice
- ☐ Labor
- ☐ NASA
- ☐ Office of Personnel Management
- ☐ Small Business Administration
- ☐ State, AID, or ICA
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Treasury
- ☐ Veterans Administration
- ☐ Other

64. How many people do you supervise?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-50
- ☐ 51-99
- ☐ 100-999
- ☐ 1,000 or more

Please use the space below to respond to questions 11, 40, and 54. (Please attach additional sheets if necessary.)

Question Number	YOUR COMMENTS
11	
40	
54	

OTHER COMMENTS

If you have any other comments, please write them here. If you need more space, please attach additional sheets of paper.

THIS COMPLETES THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please use the enclosed, postage paid envelope to return your completed questionnaire. If pre-printed envelope is unavailable, return form to:

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!



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